

## Press Release

### Weevil Release to Control Spotted Knapweed

On Wednesday, August 16th at 11:00 am, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service Fergus Falls Wetland Management District, in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Biocontrol Program, will be releasing approximately 350 knapweed root weevils to control the invasive spotted knapweed which is threatening native prairies. Youth volunteers from the Prairie Wetland Learning Center will release the weevils. The volunteers are sixth or seventh graders.

Spotted knapweed can spread quickly and displace desirable vegetation. By chemically inhibiting the growth of other vegetation, spotted knapweed can become a monoculture that reduces forage and wildlife habitat.

Spotted knapweed is a biennial or short lived perennial that reproduces by seed. It is approximately 2-3 feet tall with grey-green hairy foliage and has pinkish purple flowers. This plant is native to Eurasia and is invasive in North America because it lacks the insects and diseases that keep it in check within its native range.

Fortunately, spotted knapweed can be controlled with the use of specialized plant-feeding insects. These insects have been carefully tested to ensure that they will not feed on plants other than knapweeds. The insects used for spotted knapweed biocontrol include weevils that are seedhead and root feeders. When used together, these weevils attack the plant both above and below ground. While using insects for weed control can take years longer than chemical pesticides, the aim of releasing the weevils is to establish and sustain populations of natural enemies that will contain knapweed over the long term in a cost effective manner.

Otter Tail County has an opportunity to curtail the spread of this weed before it becomes an extensive and costly problem. Spotted knapweed infestations are beginning to appear in Otter Tail County. These infestations are relatively small. If controlled now, Otter Tail has a chance to stop the spread of this weed. Both private and public land managers can control knapweed with a variety of methods. A small number of plants can be hand pulled using gloves or sprayed with a herbicide. Large infestations can be controlled chemically or biologically. If you have knapweed on your land, contact Randy Wasvick, the Otter Tail County Agricultural Inspector for recommendations.

The goals of releasing the weevils at the US Fish and Wildlife Service Maintenance Shop are to control spotted knapweed at the site and to establish a local insectory as a resource for Otter Tail and surrounding counties. In future years, the weevils will be collected then released at new knapweed sites.

The address of the release site is:  
US Fish and Wildlife Service Maintenance Shop  
2127 Pebble Lake Road in Fergus Falls

Additional contacts: Stacy Salvevold, Refuge Operations Specialist, United States Fish and Wildlife Service Fergus Falls Wetland Management District. (218) 736-0648

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